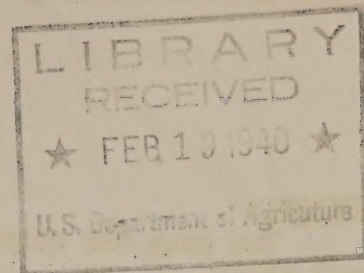


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## FROZEN FOODS AND THE FUTURE

An interview between H. C. Diehl, head of the Frozen Pack Laboratory, Bureau of Agricultural Chemistry & Engineering, Seattle, Washington, and Helen Douglass, Radio Service, broadcast in the Department of Agriculture's portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, January 31, 1940, over the National Broadcasting Company's Blue network.

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KADDERLY:

About once in a generation a new industry makes history by its influence on American agriculture, food commerce, and diet. In our grandfather's day it was the canning industry. In our father's day it was refrigerated transport bringing fresh vegetables and fruits from the South to northern winter markets. And now in our day the industry already affecting agriculture, our food trades, and our eating habits, is only 10 years old. This is the frozen fruit and vegetable industry.

Here in the studio is one of the Department's pioneer scientists in the freezing of fruits and vegetables - His name is H. C. Diehl. He is head of the Frozen Pack Laboratory at Seattle, Washington. Helen Douglass of our Radio Service is going to ask him some questions about things I believe you would like to know concerning this new industry---what it is doing; and where it's going. If you will, Helen.

DOUGLASS:

Well, Mr. Diehl, I'm full of questions.

DIEHL:

I suppose you want to know which frozen fruits and vegetables are most popular.

DOUGLASS:

Yes, and how many are being frozen. And who's going to do the freezing. But because I'm a housewife, I'll start out with a housewife's question. I'll ask first how this new industry is going to affect the meals of the average American.

DIEHL:

I'm no prophet, Mrs. Douglass. But from the way frozen foods are going, I can make a guess. For one thing, I believe frozen food will make our national food supply more secure. And I believe frozen food will improve our national diet. We'll eat more fruits and vegetables the year around. Don't the nutrition scientists say many of us need more fruits and vegetables?

DOUGLASS:

They certainly do. But needing them is one thing, and being able to buy them is another. Frozen foods are luxuries for some of us.

DIEHL:

But as the industry grows, production costs will drop, and so doubtless will retail prices. And here's another angle on cost. In different ways freezing is economical. For one thing, it prevents a good deal of spoilage.

(over)



DOUGLASS:

You mean the spinach that wilts in the grocery store, and the berries that spoil there.

DIEHL:

Yes, and the tons of fresh produce that spoil on the way to market.

DOUGLASS:

Come to think about it, there's a big loss in the kitchen, too. All those pods of peas and lima beans I throw away. And all those trimmings from spinach and broccoli shipped thousands of miles only to go in my garbage pail.

DIEHL:

Well, the freezing plants remove all those pods and trimmings. And the farmer gets back a good deal of this waste to use for stock and dairy feed, or for compost for soil building. In time this waste may go into other by-products like fiberboard, plastics, or chemicals. Only the edible parts of fruits and vegetables, are frozen and shipped. And that saves cost in transportation.

DOUGLASS:

As well as time and labor for the housewife. No wonder you say the frozen food industry has a place in our national economy, Mr. Diehl. Now let me ask you this: Do you think the new industry is going to help American farming?

DIEHL:

I do, I believe the frozen food industry is going to be a boon to agriculture, especially to those farmers who can and will grow high-quality fruits and vegetables. Freezing helps prevent flooding the market with fresh produce. It spreads the marketing of these fruits and vegetables over the months and over the miles.

DOUGLASS:

But isn't it going to bring a great many changes in fruit and vegetable growing?

DIEHL:

Of course. Every big development means change. As a matter of fact, frozen foods have already started important changes. As an example of one change, many farmers in northern States are raising crops just for freezing, and choosing varieties best adapted to freezing. Another type of change we see is that for the first time frozen products from the North are competing with fresh products from the sunny South.

DOUGLASS:

That is new. So if I want strawberry shortcake and green lima beans in February, I have my choice of fresh berries from Florida and fresh beans from Texas or California, or --

DIEHL:

Or frozen berries from Washington and frozen beans from, perhaps, New Jersey. That's exactly what's happening to the winter-market. Every State from Maine to California is competing.

DOUGLASS:

Now what about the grower in Florida, or the Rio Grande Valley, or Southern California? He's had the winter market pretty much to himself.



DIEHL:

Well, he'll probably adjust his farming methods, and may grow crops for freezing as well as the fresh market.

DOUBLASS:

Who'll win out in all this competition?

DIEHL:

The farmer whose fruits and vegetables reach the consumer with top quality. And wherever the finest fruits and vegetables are grown, the largest freezing plants will make their permanent location.

DOUGLASS:

Here's something else, Mr. Diehl. What about transportation costs and electric rates? Won't they affect the location of freezing plants?

DIEHL:

They're both important. In fact, electric rates and transportation costs have already caused shifting of the freezing centers. The original center of the industry was the Pacific Northwest, largely because the Northwest produces fine fruits and vegetables especially adapted to freezing, and also has low electric rates.

DOUGLASS:

But isn't distance from the big cities of the East a disadvantage?

DIEHL:

That's one reason the industry began moving East. The West still freezes most of the fruit. But the East now freezes over half the vegetables.

DOUGLASS:

Do you think the industry is likely to move any more?

DIEHL:

Probably it will do a lot more moving before it stops growing and settles down. One of the largest freezing concerns has just built a new plant in Oregon. That looks as if the trend might be westward again in spite of transportation costs.

DOUGLASS:

By the way, as the industry increases, who is going to do this big freezing job?

DIEHL:

Several large canning companies have already spread out into freezing. The canners have had years of training and experience in handling fruits and vegetables, and they have the equipment. The preparation of foods for freezing is very much the same as for canning.

DOUGLASS:

Yes, but the frozen foods I buy are mostly in paper container.

DIEHL:

You've hit a big problem of the industry -- containers. Frozen food must look different from canned food so the housewife won't confuse the two. The containers



also need to be sealed air-tight so the foods won't dry out as they stand in frozen storage. Perhaps one of these days the industry will freeze food in cans. Or perhaps the scientists will develop a transparent plastic container to suit both canner and housewife. The plastic might even be made of the waste from the frozen food.

DOUBLASS:

That would be efficiency. But to go back to problems, I understand some fruits and vegetables freeze better than others.

DIEHL:

And some varieties freeze better than others. Our Frozen Pack Laboratory, working with plant scientists, has already tested over 100 varieties of green peas to learn which are the best "freezers." And the plant scientists are on the long job of breeding new varieties just for freezing.

DOUBLASS:

Now tell me this: How many frozen products are on the market now?

DIEHL:

You can buy about 25 frozen fruits, and about 20 vegetables. You can also buy a number of frozen juices and purees.

DOUGLASS:

What's the most popular frozen fruit?

DIEHL:

Strawberries -- they still head the list for dessert use, with blueberries second and cherries third. However, peaches are rapidly coming up in popularity. And the freestone peach which has the most flavor happens to freeze very well.

DOUGLASS:

What's the most popular frozen vegetable?

DIEHL:

Green peas -- still way out in front. In fact, almost twice as many peas are frozen each year as any other vegetable. Lima beans are next with broccoli, spinach and asparagus running close. Perhaps you'll be interested to know that last year's total frozen vegetable pack was around 85 million pounds. The fruit pack was around 117 million pounds. But only a few million of that were in small containers for dessert use. The rest of the fruit pack was frozen in barrels for the jam-makers, and the bakery and ice-cream trade.

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